

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The claims are 16-17.

Claims 16 and 17 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hitomi et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0019308). As the Examiner points out, Hitomi et al. disclose the use of sulfonated styrene/butadiene copolymers as the cation-exchange resin [0058].

In reply, "sulfonated styrene/butadiene copolymer" has been deleted from claim 16.

In the above-amended claim 16, the proton-supplying material consists essentially of at least one of polymeric acids selected from a limited number of specific polymers, from which "sulfonated styrene/butadiene copolymer" has been deleted.

Accordingly, claims 16-17 are not anticipated by Hitomi et al.

No further issues remaining, allowance of this application is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any comments or proposals for expediting prosecution, please contact undersigned at the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

Megumu NAGASAWA et al.

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